THE MAN WHO LOST HIS SHADOW!

10¢
NO. 5

TALES OF TERROR

TALES OF HORROR

HAND OF FATE!

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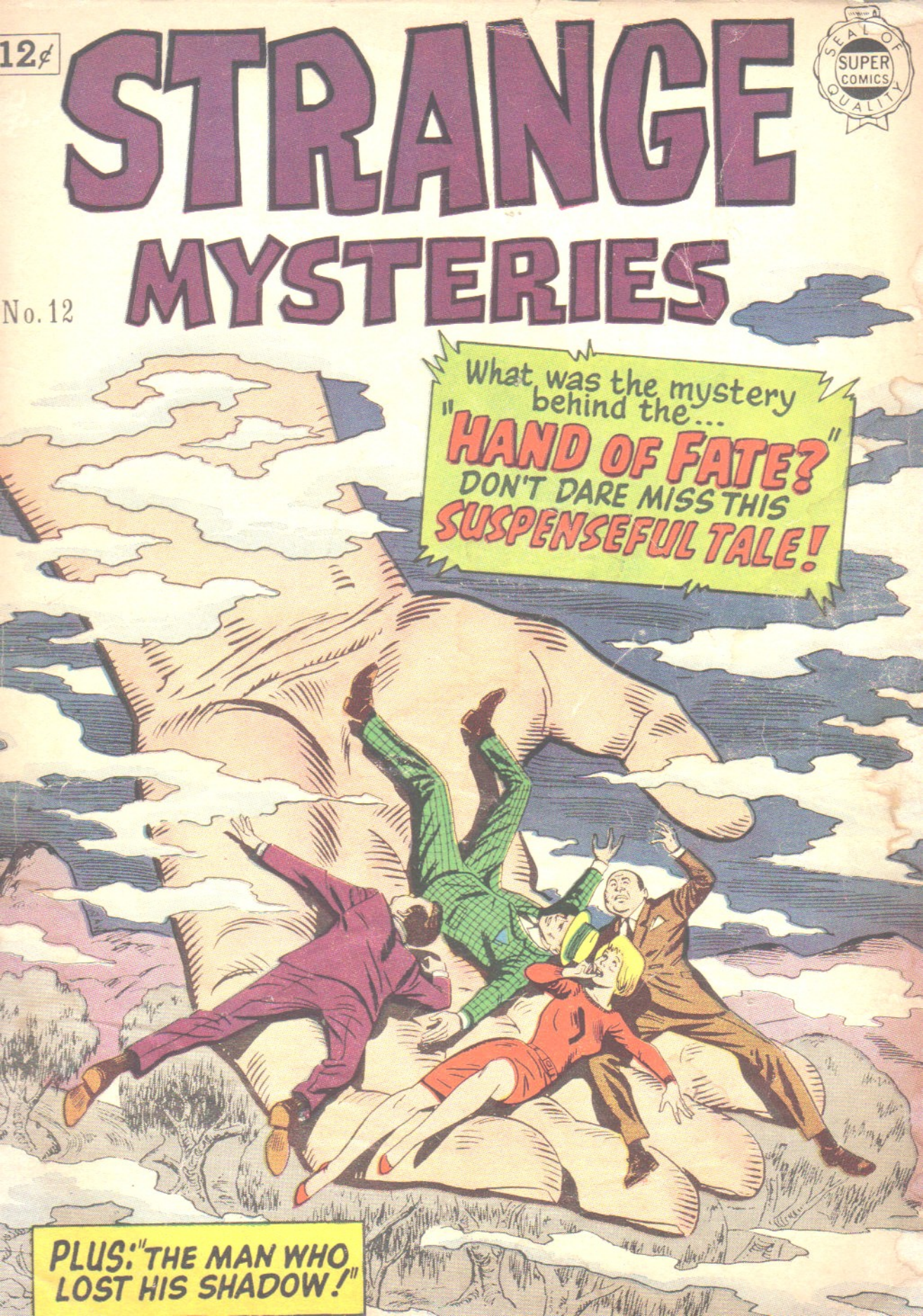
STRANGE MYSTERIES

No. 12



STRANGE MYSTERIES
UNFOLDS THE TALE OF...
ALCHEMY
BACK IN THE MIDDLE-AGES, THE MYSTERIOUS MEN OF SCIENCE WERE CALLED ALCHEMISTS! THEIR LABORATORIES WERE DARK AND GLOOMY! PAPERS COVERED WITH MYSTIC SIGNS WERE STREWN ABOUT, AND BAD ODORS FROM THEIR WEIRD MIXTURES CAUSED PEOPLE TO LOOK UPON ALCHEMY AS SOMETHING SUPERNATURAL! AND THE ALCHEMIST, A MAN FROM ANOTHER WORLD!
WORD OF MEN DEALING IN "STRANGE" EXPERIMENTS HAD PEOPLE SPREADING STORIES ABOUT... SOME SAYING THAT GREMLINS CAME OUT OF THE SMOKEY DUNGEONS OF MYSTERY! EVEN SWEARING THEY THEMSELVES HAVE ACTUALLY SEEN THESE CREATURES!
BUT DESPITE THE TALKS AND RUMORS, THE ALCHEMIST KEPT AT HIS LABORATORY, AND THROUGH THE AGES CAME UP WITH ANSWERS THAT TODAY ARE SO IMPORTANT IN MODERN SCIENCE!

A TALE OF HORROR

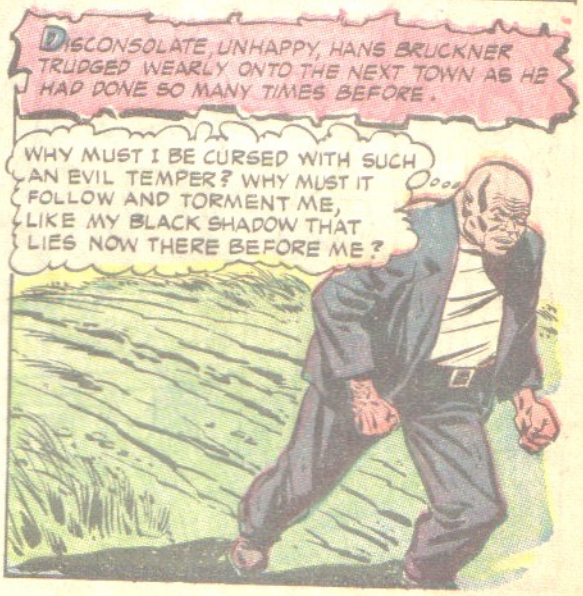
THE MAN WHO LOST HIS SHADOW!

ONCE MORE HANS BRUCKNER IS IN TROUBLE! ORDINARLY A KIND AND GENTLE SOUL, HANS CANNOT CONTROL AN INSANE TEMPER THAT VIOLENTLY ERUPTS WHEN TAUNTED FOR HIS UNGAINLY AND APELIKE APPEARANCE. THIS EVIL FORCE LED HIM TO MANY NEAR TRAGEDIES WHICH DROVE HIM OUT OF TOWN AFTER TOWN!

WE'VE WARNED YOU BEFORE, HANS BRUCKNER. THIS IS FINAL! YOU MUST LEAVE OUR TOWN! WE DON'T WANT YOUR KIND HERE!

CALL ME AN APE, WILL YOU?

BROWN + GANTZ.



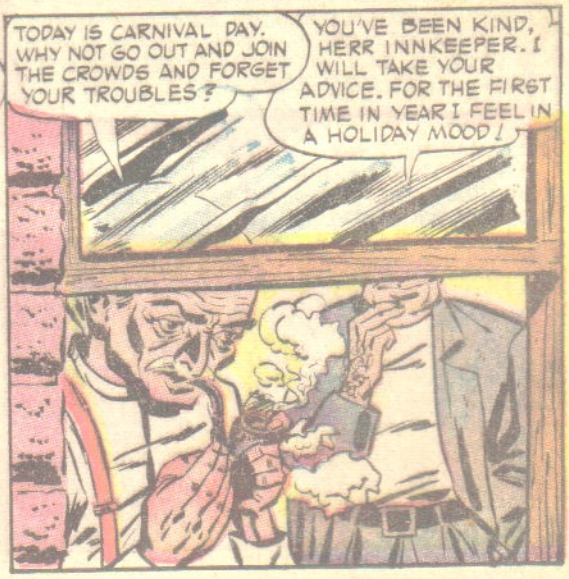
BROODING DARKLY, HANS REGISTERED AT AN INN AND AS HE ASCENDED TO HIS ROOM, IN HIS MIND THERE GREW A CONVICTION OF WHAT HE MUST DO.
THERE'S A STRANGE GUEST. I'D BEST BE KEEPING AN EYE ON HIM, TONIGHT!

AS THE NIGHT WORE ON, HANS BRUCKNER CAME TO HIS GRIM DECISION...
CRASH

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THERE? OPEN UP! THIS IS THE INNKEEPER. OPEN UP, I SAY!!

GETTING NO RESPONSE, THE INNKEEPER LET'S HIMSELF IN WITH HIS PASS KEY, AND...

THE NEXT MORNING...
GOOD! YOU'RE AWAKE! WHATEVER YOUR TROUBLES ARE MY SON, IN TIME YOU'LL FIND THAT THEY DISAPPEAR LIKE THE SHADOWS OF NIGHT BEFORE THE MORNING SUN!
YES, PERHAPS YOU ARE RIGHT. STRANGELY ENOUGH, THAT MORNING SUN BRINGS ME A GOOD AND DIFFERENT FEELING!


TODAY IS CARNIVAL DAY. WHY NOT GO OUT AND JOIN THE CROWDS AND FORGET YOUR TROUBLES?
YOU'VE BEEN KIND, HERR INNKEEPER. I WILL TAKE YOUR ADVICE. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN YEAR I FEEL IN A HOLIDAY MOOD!

STEP UP, GOOD CITIZENS! GET YOUR SILHOUETTE CUT OUT FROM YOUR SHADOW! ... YOU... THE APE-LIKE ONE THERE... STEP UP AND I'LL DO YOURS FREE!
HA HA HA HA!
PROF KURT

STRANGELY, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HIS LIFE, THE LAUGHTER DOES NOT DISTURB BRUCKNER. GOOD NATUREDLY HE AMBLED UP TO THE PLATFORM.
RIGHT OVER HERE, APE-ONE. STAND WHERE SUN WILL THROW YOUR SHADOW ON THE CANVAS.

WHAT STRANGE MANNER OF CREATURE ARE YOU? YOU HAVE NO SHADOW!
WHAT?
PROF KURT

I...I'VE... LOST...MY...SHADOW! IT CAN'T BE! PEOPLE CAN'T LOSE THEIR SHADOWS!

SUDDENLY PROFESSOR KURT REALIZED THAT IN HANS BRUCKNER HE HAS A GOLD MINE... IF ONLY HE CAN PROVE WHAT HE HAS JUST SEEN. HE RUSHED HANS INTO THE TENT.
AMAZING... NO MATTER HOW I SHINE THIS LIGHT THERE IS NO SHADOW. WHAT IS YOUR NAME, FELLOW?
HANS BRUCKNER... BUT...I..DON'T UNDERSTAND...

WHY HANS, YOU'VE LOST YOUR SHADOW. JOIN MY SHOW AND THAT'S THE WAY WE'LL BILL YOU! THE MAN WHO LOST HIS SHADOW! YOU'LL MAKE A FORTUNE!
WHY NOT? ALL MY LIFE I'VE BEEN LOOKED UPON AS A FREAK... WHY NOT GET PAID FOR BEING ONE?

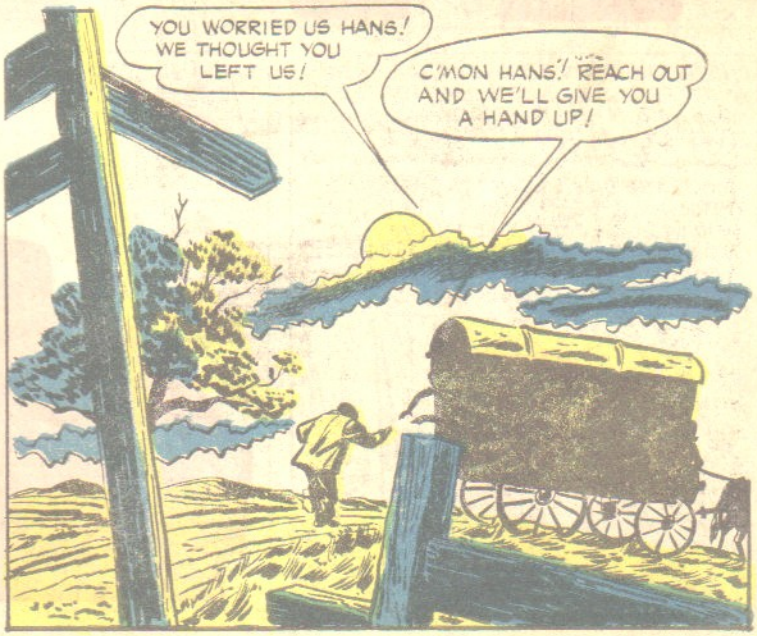
HANS WAS HAPPY. HE ENJOYED HIS NEW LIFE WITHOUT HIS SHADOW
AND HERE, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN IS THE MIRACLE OF THE AGE! HANS BRUCKNER, THE MAN WITHOUT A SHADOW.... STEP RIGHT UP.....STEP RIGHT IN!
PROF.

YOU CALL THAT A MAN? LOOKS MORE LIKE A MONKEY TO ME!
AT ONE TIME I COULD HAVE STRANGLED HIM FOR SAYING THAT... BUT NOW...
I'M A MAN ALL RIGHT, BUT I BET ON PAYDAY, I'LL MAKE A MONKEY OUT OF YOU!

THE CARNIVAL MOVED ON TO ITS NEXT STOP AND AN EVENING LATER, AFTER THE SHOW...
LOOK! THAT'S THE MAN WHO WAS LAUGHTING AT HANS THE OTHER DAY!
HANS WILL BE SURPRISED WHEN HE COMES BACK FROM TOWN!
DAILY NEWS
MAN FOUND STRANGLED!

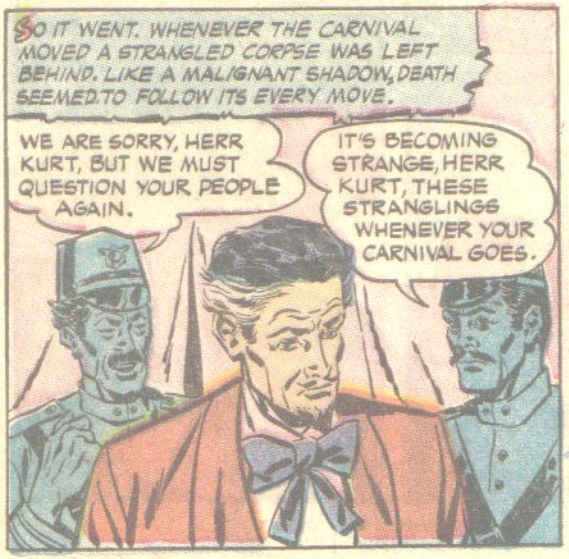
I'M LATE, I DON'T WANT THE CARNIVAL TO LEAVE WITHOUT ME!

YOU...YOU CLUMSY APE! WHY DON'T YOU LOOK WHERE YOU ARE GOING?
MY APOLOGIES, MEIN HERR, BUT I'M LATE!

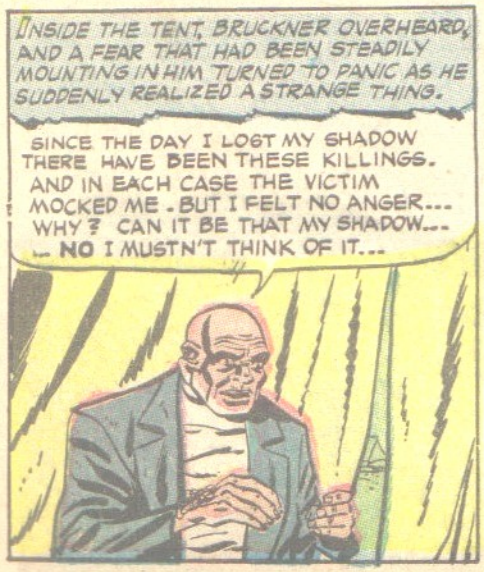

YOU WORRIED US HANS! WE THOUGHT YOU LEFT US!
C'MON HANS! REACH OUT AND WE'LL GIVE YOU A HAND UP!

THE NEXT DAY....
EXTRA! KILLER ON THE LOOSE! STRANGLER STRIKES AGAIN!

STRANGE! THAT'S THE MAN I KNOCKED DOWN LAST NIGHT!


SO IT WENT. WHENEVER THE CARNIVAL MOVED A STRANGLED CORPSE WAS LEFT BEHIND. LIKE A MALIGNANT SHADOW, DEATH SEEMED TO FOLLOW ITS EVERY MOVE.
WE ARE SORRY, HERR KURT, BUT WE MUST QUESTION YOUR PEOPLE AGAIN.
IT'S BECOMING STRANGE, HERR KURT, THESE STRANGLINGS WHENEVER YOUR CARNIVAL GOES.

SO YOU MUST BOTHER MY PEOPLE! MAKE THEM SO NERVOUS THEY CAN'T WORK! AND WHY? SINCE THESE KILLINGS HAPPEN AFTER WE LEAVE A TOWN. AND I CAN PERSONALLY SPEAK FOR EVERYONE IN MY SHOW AT THE TIME!


INSIDE THE TENT, BRUCKNER OVERHEARD, AND A FEAR THAT HAD BEEN STEADILY MOUNTING IN HIM TURNED TO PANIC AS HE SUDDENLY REALIZED A STRANGE THING.
SINCE THE DAY I LOST MY SHADOW THERE HAVE BEEN THESE KILLINGS. AND IN EACH CASE THE VICTIM MOCKED ME. BUT I FELT NO ANGER... WHY? CAN IT BE THAT MY SHADOW... ... NO I MUSTN'T THINK OF IT...

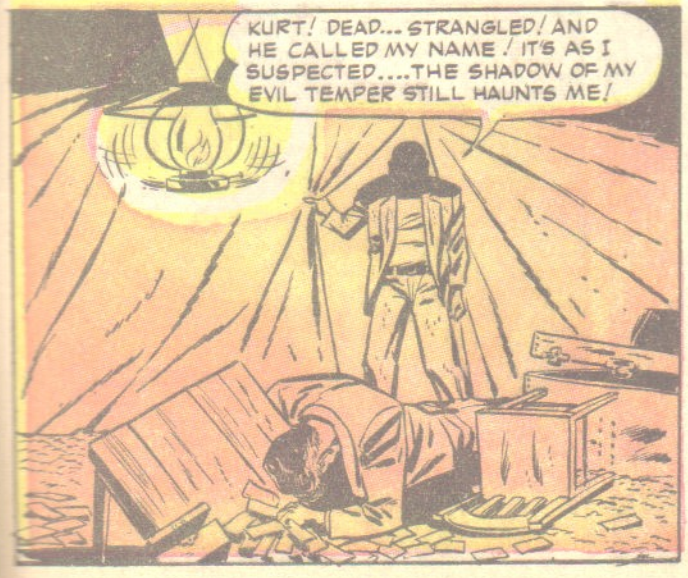
HANS! SINCE YOU JOINED OUR SHOW THESE KILLINGS HAVE DOGGED US. I KNOW IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT, BUT I MUST LET YOU GO. WHO KNOWS, PERHAPS YOUR LOST SHADOW WILL REJOIN YOU AND YOU'LL BE A WHOLE MAN AGAIN!

I'LL COUNT OUT YOUR MONEY NOW...

SEVENTY FIVE, SEVENTY SIX...
WHY... WHY SHOULD KURT CHOOSE TO FIRE ME? I WAS HAPPY WITH THE CARNIVAL!

HANS... EEEAYYYY... NO HANS NO!

PLEASE HANS, NO.....
AAAAARRGGHH


KURT! DEAD... STRANGLED! AND HE CALLED MY NAME! IT'S AS I SUSPECTED....THE SHADOW OF MY EVIL TEMPER STILL HAUNTS ME!

WHAT HAPPENED ?
IT'S MY SHADOW ...MY SHADOW...

I MUST GET OUT OF THE MOONLIGHT! ONLY IN THE DARKNESS WILL I HAVE NO SHADOW.

NO...NOT ME TOO! WE BELONG TOGETHER...WE BELONG....
AAAIIIEEEEEEEE

NEXT MORNING....
WHO WOULD HAVE EVER THOUGHT THAT SIMPLE HANS BRUCKNER COULD BE SUCH A CLEVER KILLER!
STRANGE HE SHOULD HANG HIMSELF. NOBODY SUSPECTED HIM!

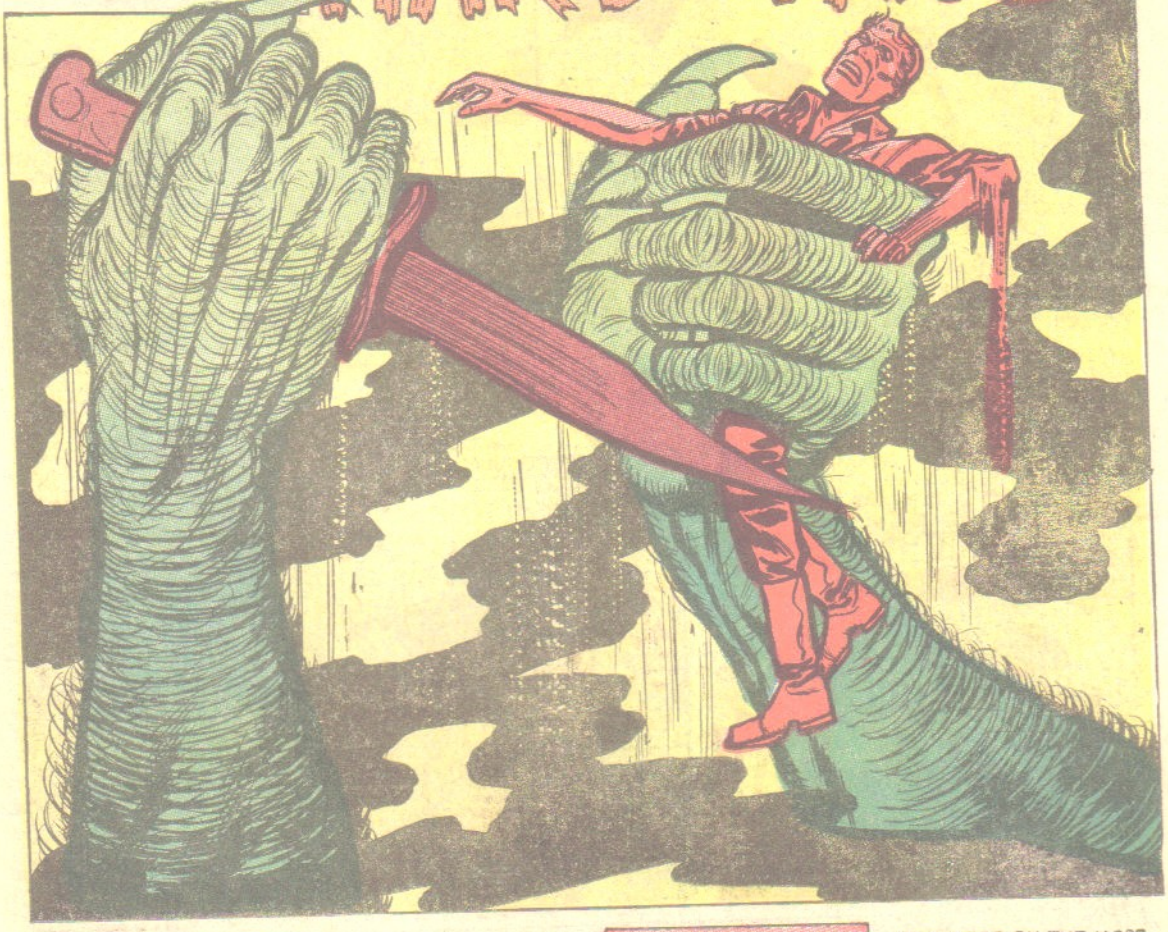
LOOK! IN DEATH HE HAS FOUND HIS SHADOW!

THE END

A TALE OF HORROR

THERE IS NO TELLING WHAT OR WHOM YOU'LL MEET ON DENMARK'S FOGGY MOORS. A YOUNG MAN WITH LOVE IN HIS HEART CAN END WITH A **DAGGER** IN HIS HEART INSTEAD! ... A DEATH BLOW DELIVERED BY NO HUMAN HANDS!

HAND OF FATE!



DARKNESS FALLS

THE DARKNESS OF DEATH!
EEEEEEE!!!!!

HOURS LATER, WHEN THE DARKNESS FADED INTO MORNING...
ANOTHER VICTIM OF THE BEAST! THAT MAKES THREE THIS MONTH!
AND ALL THREE MEMBERS OF YOUR FARM, ELSTED! WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
THERE IS NOTHING TO DO. I'LL BURY THE DEAD... AND LOOK FOR ANOTHER SHEPARD!

BUT HOW CAN YOU TAKE THESE DEATHS SO CALMLY?
THERE IS NOTHING TO DO. THE DEAD REMAINS DEAD THE MOOR BEAST REMAINS UNCAUGHT. COME, EVARD, WE HAVE WORK TO DO!
YES, FATHER!

JUST WHAT IS THE MOOR BEAST, FATHER?
I DO NOT KNOW. THE OLD ONES SAY THE BEAST IS SOMETHING NOT DEAD NOR YET ALIVE. NOT MAN... NOR AN ANIMAL. HOW SHALL I, AN IGNORANT FARMER, KNOW?

IT IS BETTER NOT TO THINK ABOUT WHAT LIES BEYOND THE SIGHT OF MEN... BEYOND THEIR REASON! ABOVE ALL, DO NOT MENTION THIS DEATH TO THE WOMEN. DEATH UPSETS YOUR MOTHER, EVARD.
YES, FATHER!

THE FOLLOWING DAY, IN THE GRAVEYARD...
ASHES TO ASHES AND DUST TO DUST...
FATHER! LOOK! KARL HANSEN... HE IS TRYING TO MAKE KATRINA TALK TO HIM!...
THE STUBBORN FOOL! HE WILL SEIZE ANY OPPOTUNITY TO FURTHER HIS SUIT... EVEN IN A GRAVEYARD!

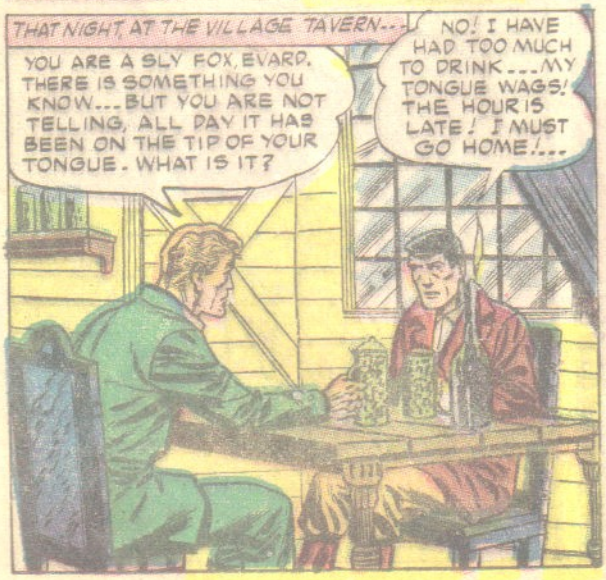
WHY DOESN'T YOUR FATHER LET ME COURT YOU, KATRINA? WHY AM I DRIVEN FROM YOUR HOUSE LIKE A LEPER? I NEVER SEE YOU ANY MORE. YOU LIVE IN YOUR HOUSE LIKE A PRISONER!
KARL! HAVE YOU NO RESPECT FOR THE DEAD? A MAN IS BEING BURIED HERE...AND YOU PRESS YOUR SUIT!

I WOULD NOT PRESS IT HERE, IF I COULD SEE KATRINA AT YOUR HOME, ELSTED. BUT YOU HAVE BARRED YOUR HOME TO ME! WHY..? I SHALL NEVER UNDERSTAND. I HAVE NOT SEEN HER FOR MONTHS. SHE NEVER LEAVE YOUR HOUSE.

KATRINA IS NOT OLD. SHE IS NOT SICK. WHY MUST SHE LIVE LIKE A HERMIT NOR SPEAK A SINGLE WORD OR SMILE ANY MORE. WHY?
LET'S GO, KATRINA. THE FUNERAL IS OVER!

YOU HAVEN'T ANSWERED! WHAT IS WRONG WITH ME? I AM YOUNG. I WORK HARD. I HAVE MONEY SAVED... MY OWN FARM, MY REPUTATION IS GOOD. WHY CAN'T I COURT KATRINA?
I WILL NOT GIVE MY CONSENT! NOW TAKE YOUR HAND AWAY!

WHY, EVARD? WHY? EVERYBODY KNOWS I HAVE LOVED KATRINA SINCE WE WERE CHILDREN! WHAT HAS COME BETWEEN US?
MY FATHER IS A STRANGE MAN, WITH AN IRON WILL, WE CANNOT QUESTION HIM. WE CAN ONLY OBEY!


THAT NIGHT, AT THE VILLAGE TAVERN--
YOU ARE A SLY FOX, EVARD. THERE IS SOMETHING YOU KNOW... BUT YOU ARE NOT TELLING. ALL DAY IT HAS BEEN ON THE TIP OF YOUR TONGUE. WHAT IS IT?
NO! I HAVE HAD TOO MUCH TO DRINK... MY TONGUE WAGS! THE HOUR IS LATE! I MUST GO HOME!...

NO! YOU CAN NOT LEAVE! NOT TILL YOU TELL ME THIS SECRET YOU'RE HIDING! SPEAK!
THERE IS NOTHING! NO SECRET! LET ME ALONE!
COME BACK! BOTH OF YOU! YOU HAVE NOT PAID FOR YOUR DRINKS!

LET GO, I TELL YOU. LET GO!

HERE! TAKE YOUR BLASTED MONEY! I'VE GOT TO GO AFTER HIM

YOU'LL NEVER FIND HIM NOW ---IN THAT FOG COME BACK, HANSEN!
HE KNOWS SOMETHING! AND HE IS GOING TO TELL ME WHAT IT IS!

EVARD! COME BACK! THIS IS KARL HANSEN! I WANT TO TALK TO YOU! EVARD!

EVARD!

EVARD! WHERE ARE YOU?
S-SOMETHING IS OUT THERE! W-WHO'S THERE? WHAT DO YO WANT?

GASP!
GRRRARRR!

E-EEY!!!EEE!

AAAANA!
EVARD! HE'S IN TROUBEL...SOME BEAST MUST HAVE ATTACKED HIM!

EVARD! W-WHAT HAPP...(GASP!) GREAT HEAVENS!
GRRRRR!

YOU DEVILS!...YOU SHALL NOT FIND ME SO EASY A MARK!
YYEOEWWW!

IIIIAAAA!

COME BACK HERE! COME BACK!
YYIIADOWW!

THERE IS NO SENSE FOLLOWING THEM! THE FOG SWALLOW THEM UP! I'LL NEVER FIND THEM AGAIN!

EVARD'S DEAD! HIS THROAT RIPPED OUT! AS IF THE BEAST INTEND TO SUCK THE BLOOD OUT OF HIS BODY! BUT THEY ARE NOT BEASTS!...THEY WALK ON TWO LEGS!

THE FOLLOWING DAY...
YOUR SON IS NOW DEAD, ELSTED. DO YOU STILL WANT TO DO NOTHING? THE MUDERERS ARE STILL AT LARGE!
THERE IS NOTHING WE CAN DO. THE KILLERS ARE NOT HUMAN. MAN CANNOT FIGHT THE SUPERNATURAL!

BUT ELSTED..THESE BEAST ARE NOT SUPERNATURAL! I SLASHED ONE ON THE HAND. THE BEAST SCREAMED IN PAIN AND RAN FROM ME! I KICKED THE OTHER! AND IT'S BODY HAD SUBSTANCE. GHOST OR PHANTOMS DO NOT RUN FROM MEN. CREATURES FROM BEYOND DO NOT FEAR MERE MORTALS!
I HAVE SPOKEN. I WILL DO NOTHING. I HAVE BURIED MY SON. NOW I SHALL GO HOME!

WHAT AN OBSTINATE MAN! MEMBERS OF HIS FAMILY... HIS WORKERS... ALL SLAIN... YET HE DOES NOTHING!
YOU'RE WRONG. ELSTED HAS A SECRET, EVARD KNEW THE SECRET. I WAS GOING TO FORCE HIM TO TELL IT TO ME WHEN HE DIED.

BUT IF ELSTED WON'T SPEAK...I KNOW SOMEBODY WHO WILL! KATRINA! I WILL QUIETLY STEAL INTO ELSTED HOUSE WHEN ELSTED IS AWAY! THEN I WILL LEARN ELSTED'S SECRET ONCE AND FOR ALL... FROM HER LIPS!

THAT NIGHT AS THE FOG ROLLED IN FROM THE SEA.
I GAVE ELSTED YOUR MESSAGE, KARL. SEE? HE LEAVES NOW FOR THE GRANGE MEETING... BUT WHAT WILL HE DO WHEN HE REACHES TOWN AND FIND THAT I HAVE LIED? HE WILL BE FURIOUS AT ME!
NEVER MIND. I'LL TAKE THE RESPONSIBILITY! HERE'S SOMETHING FOR YOU! GO!

SHORTLY AFTER AT THE FARM HOUSE.
GASP!
DON'T BE FRIGHTENED, KATRINA, IT'S ME. I HAD TO TALK TO YOU. STRANGE THINGS HAVE BEEN HAPPENING THE PAST YEAR. THE STRANGEST HAS BEEN THE BEHAVIOR OF YOUR FATHER. HE WON'T LET ME NEAR YOU. WHY?

YOUR MOTHER HAS BEEN A MUTE EVER SINCE I CAN REMEMBER. BUT YOU... YOU USED TO TALK AND SMILE. WHY DON'T YOU TALK AND SMILE ANYMORE? EVEN NOW... THOUGH YOU'RE FRIGHTENED YOU DON'T CRY OUT.

WHY? THERE'S GOT TO BE AN ANSWER! SPEAK! YOU'RE GOING TO SPEAK... THERE'S A SECRET HERE AND I'M GOING TO FIND IT OUT, NO MATTER WHAT THE COST!

SLOWLY KARL HANSEN UNWRAPPED THE BANDAGE FROM THE GIRL HE LOVED. THERE, AS PLAIN AS DAY, WERE THREE DEEP SCARS. THE HAND HE SOUGHT IN MARRIAGE WAS THE HAND OF A MONSTER!

THE END

A TALE OF HORROR

A TWISTED MIND, AN ANCIENT BOOK OF WITCHCRAFT, AND A STORM-BOUND ISLAND... BREW THEM TOGETHER AND THE RESULT IS HORROR AND DEATH FOR THE

SISTERS OF THE WITCH

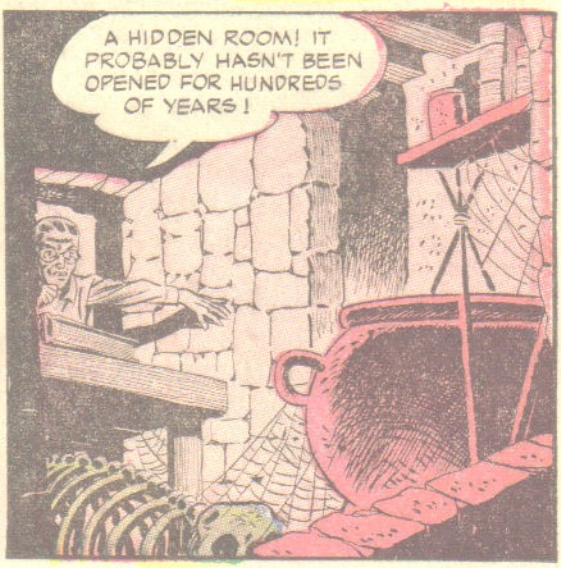
NIGH FALLS ON STORM-WHIPPED "DEAD WITCH ISLAND," WHERE STEVENS, AND HIS FATHER OPERATE A TINY INN.

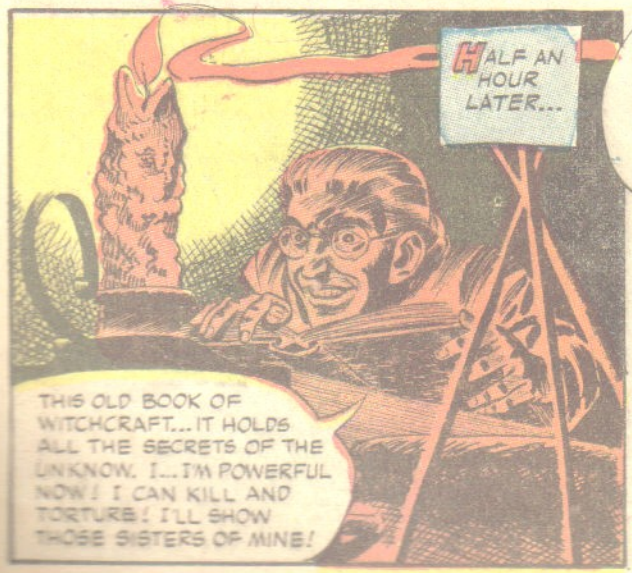
INSIDE, THEIR ONLY GUESTS THE FOUR CASS SISTERS - HUG THE COZY FIRE.

TELL US A STORY ABOUT THIS ISLAND, ROB. WERE THERE REALLY WITCHES HERE?
WELL, THE OLD FOLKS SAY... WOULD YOU LIKE TO HEAR ABOUT IT BETH?
I CAN'T STAND TO WATCH THEM THROW THEMSELVES AT HIM ANY MORE! I MUST GET AWAY ...THINK...!

SEEKING SOLITUDE, MARTHA SCURRIES TO THE ANCIENT CELLAR. BUT AS SHE RACES DOWN THE STAIRS..
MAE AND HER PRETTY FACE... LIL SHOWING OFF HER FIGURE... AND BETH PRETENDING TO BE SHY AND INNOCENT! I WISH COULD....

OHHH! WHAT...?

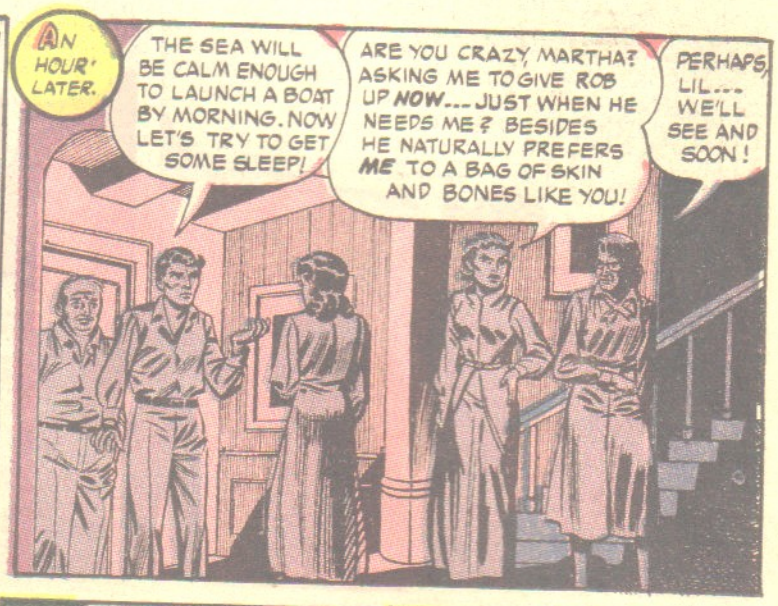

A HIDDEN ROOM! IT PROBABLY HASN'T BEEN OPENED FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS!


HALF AN HOUR LATER...
THIS OLD BOOK OF WITCHCRAFT... IT HOLDS ALL THE SECRETS OF THE UNKNOW. I... I'M POWERFUL NOW! I CAN KILL AND TORTURE! I'LL SHOW THOSE SISTERS OF MINE!

I'LL GIVE THEM ONE MORE CHANCE! I MUST BE KIND AFTER ALL... HA HA! BUT THEN, IF THEY DON'T GIVE THE MAN I LOVE BACK TO ME, I'LL...!!!

MOMENTS LATER-
FOR THE LAST TIME, MAE... LET ROB ALONE! I LOVE HIM...HE BELONG TO ME!
OH, DON'T BE RIDICULOUS, MARTHA! WHY WOULD ROB WANT TO LOOK AT A FACE LIKE YOURS, WHEN HE CAN LOOK AT A PRETTY ONE LIKE MINE?
GIVE UP, MARTHA! YOU'RE DOOMED TO BE AN OLD MAID, AND YOU KNOW IT!
ALL RIGHT THEN, FOOL! SOON YOUR FACE WILL BE ENOUGH TO DRIVE MAN MAD WITH TERROR!
SOON THE SISTERS PREPARE FOR BED... ALL BUT ONE! THAT ONE IS BUSY BELOW THEM IN THE HIDDEN ROOM...
MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL WHO'S THE UGLIEST OF ALL? SHOW HER, MIRROR! SHOW MAE HER REAL FACE!
AT THAT MOMENT ABOVE...
THAT...THAT STRANGE FIRE IN THE MIRROR! AND MY FACE...MY FACE! IT'S CHANGING!
NO! NO! I CAN'T LIVE WITH A FACE LIKE THAT! I WON'T! I WON'T!
MAE, WHAT IS IT? OPEN THE DOOR... IT'S ROB!
DON'T, MAE... WAIT!

ROB WHAT IS IT? IS SHE..?
YES, BETH... SHE'S DEAD! BUT YOU MUSTN'T LOOK AT HER NOW... BELIEVE ME! I'LL GO TO THE MAIN LAND TOMORROW FOR THE POLICE...


AN HOUR LATER.
THE SEA WILL BE CALM ENOUGH TO LAUNCH A BOAT BY MORNING. NOW LET'S TRY TO GET SOME SLEEP!
ARE YOU CRAZY, MARTHA? ASKING ME TO GIVE ROB UP NOW... JUST WHEN HE NEEDS ME? BESIDES HE NATURALLY PREFERS ME TO A BAG OF SKIN AND BONES LIKE YOU!
PERHAPS, LIL... WE'LL SEE AND SOON!

AND AS MIDNIGHT SETTLES OVER DEADWITCH ISLAND...
COME, ALL YE CREATURES OF THE NIGHT... COME STING AND SCRATCH AND CLAW AND BITE! SOON THAT FLESH SO PALE AND PROUD SHALL WEAR NOUGHT BUT A BLOODY SHROUD!

POOR MAE! I WONDER ...WHAT'S THAT STRANGE HUMMING NOISE?

I CAN'T STAND IT! AAAEEEEEE!
NO, LIL! DON'T! WAIT!

GONE... INTO THE SEA! BUT AM I CRAZY? DID I REALLY SEE RATS AND ...? I CAN'T WAIT ANY LONGER I MUST GET HELP!
EEEEEEEEEE

BUT THE SEA, SON, IT'S DANGEROUS!
I'VE GOT TO TRY, DAD. ...THERE'S NO OTHER WAY. DON'T LET BETH OUT OF YOUR SIGHT FOR A MINUTE WHILE I'M GONE!
BETH! NOT A THOUGHT FOR ME, THOUGH!

PLEASE, ROB. DON'T GO!
I'M GOING FOR YOUR SAKE, BETH...SO NOTHING WILL HAPPEN TO YOU! YOU MUST KNOW BY NOW HOW I FEEL ABOUT YOU!

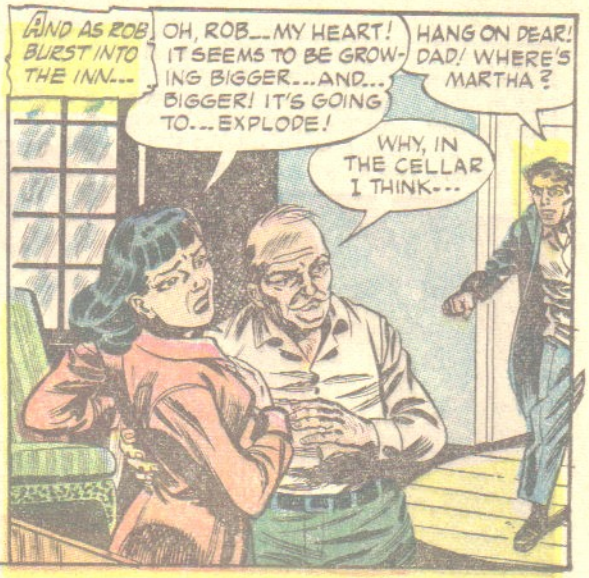
DON'T FORGET, ROB. AT LEAST YOU CAN BE SURE I'LL BE HERE WHEN YOU GET BACK!
SURE, SURE, MARTHA! DON'T WORRY BETH!
BE CARE-FUL!

AND THE MOMENT ROB IS GONE...
I'M SORRY, MARTHA— I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL! BUT ROB LOVES ME. SOMEDAY YOU'LL MEET THE RIGHT MAN FOR YOU, AND...
ROB IS THE MAN FOR ME. THIS IS YOUR LAST CHANCE BETH!

I CAN'T GIVE HIM UP, MARTHA. EVERYTIME I LOOK AT HIM, MY HEART NEARLY BURSTS WITH LOVE AND---
NEARLY BURSTS, DOES IT? THAT GIVES ME AN IDEA!
POOR MARTHA! SHE LOOK SO STRANGLY UPSET!

HA! HA! THIS WILL BE THE MOST FITTING OF ALL! DEMONS OF DARKNESS BREAK HER HEART! MAKE IT GROW UNTIL IT BURSTS APART!
HA-HA-HA!

AND JUST AT THAT MOMENT OUTSIDE.
THAT MARTHA'S A STRANGE ONE. WHAT DID SHE SAY TO ME?..."YOU CAN BE SURE I'LL BE HERE WHE..." MARTHA! SHE'S RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL THIS, SOMEHOW! I'VE GOT TO GET BACK TO THE HOUSE!


AND AS ROB BURST INTO THE INN...
OH, ROB...MY HEART! IT SEEMS TO BE GROWING BIGGER...AND... BIGGER! IT'S GOING TO...EXPLODE!
HANG ON DEAR! DAD! WHERE'S MARTHA?
WHY, IN THE CELLAR I THINK...

COME ON, DAD! - BRING BETH WITH YOU, WE'LL STOP THIS HORRIBLE BUSINESS ONCE AND FOR ALL!
HURRY, ROB! IT...HURT SO!

ROB, WAIT! LISTEN, HERE BY THIS WALL!
HA! HA! DEMONS OF DARKNESS, BREAK HER HEART!

THAT SHE-DEVIL IS BACK OF THIS WALL, I'LL TEAR IT...THERE! IT'S OPENING
THE HIDDEN ROOM! MY FATHER SPOKE OF IT, BUT I NEVER COULD FIND IT!

YOU MAD WOMAN! LET BETH FREE OF YOUR EVIL SPELL OR I'LL...!!
COME ON IN! I'VE BEEN EXPECTING THE THREE OF YOU!

YES, YES... I'VE BROUGHT OUT MY STAR PERFORMER FOR YOU! LOOK... MY FIERY SNAKE OF DEATH! I LEARNED MANY THINGS FROM THIS BOOK... AMONG THEM, HOW TO KILL YOU ALL! YOU ALL HATE ME, SO YOU ALL DIE... THE MOST EVIL ONE FIRST!
STOP IT! YOU BABBLING MONSTER!

FIERY SNAKE, SNAKE OF DOOM! FIRST KILL THE MOST EVIL ONE IN THIS ROOM!
SHE'S POINTING AT YOU! RUN, BETH!

FIERY SNAKE, SNAKE OF ...NO! NO! NOT ME! NOT ME

AGGHHHHH!
NO, ROB! YOU CAN'T HELP HER NOW... LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT BETH?
YES... THE PAIN IS GONE NOW! BUT ROB, WHAT A TERRIBLE DEATH FOR MARTHA!
SHE BROUGHT IT ON HERSELF! SHE TOLD THAT... THAT THING TO KILL THE MOST EVIL ONE IN THE ROOM!

IT WILL NEVER HAPPEN AGAIN DEAR. THAT DEADLY BOOK HAS GONE UP IN SMOKE.
I WONDER? I THINK I'LL SELL THIS PLACE AND MOVE AWAY- BOOK OR NO BOOK!
OH, ROB, IT'S WONDERFUL JUST TO BE ALIVE AND ABLE TO LOVE YOU!

A TALE OF HORROR

GAME OF DEATH

IT WAS A CONTEST BETWEEN THE WORLD'S GREATEST CHESS-MASTERS... TILL ANOTHER "MASTER" APPEARED TO CHALLENGE BOTH THEIR SKILLS....

SIMON LA PAZ WAS THE GREATEST CHESS PLAYER IN THE WORLD! HE HAD JUST WON THE WORLD'S CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP IN PARIS...

LA PAZ LEFT THE CONTEST HALL WITH A THOUSAND CHEERS RINGING PLEASANTLY IN HIS EARS.

ALL THIS CAME AS NO SURPRISE TO SIMON LA PAZ, WHO WAS AS CONVINCED OF HIS SUPERIORITY AS A KING IS SURE OF HIS ROYALTY! THE ADULATION AMUSED HIM ONLY TO A POINT...

THE PRESS IS WAITING FOR AN INTERVIEW, SENOR!

I WILL SEE NOBODY! THEIR STUPID QUESTIONS BORE ME!

GREATNESS SHOULD STAND ALONE ..ALOOF...OUT OF REACH! GREATNESS WRAPS ITSELF IN MYSTERY! LET THE WORLD WONDER....AND WORSHIP WHAT THEY WONDER.

AS YOU WISH, SENOR!

SO SIMON LA PAZ STROLLED ABOUT THE PRIVACY OF HIS DRAWING ROOM, BOREDLY EXAMINING THE MANY TOKENS OF ADMIRATION HE'D RECEIVED---

FLOWERS, POEMS GLOVES, WATCHES, MONEY...EVERYTHING UNIMAGINATIVE AND UNSTIMULATING! DOES THE WORLD CONSIST OF ONLY ONE NOBLE AND ORIGINAL MIND... MY OWN?

THEN LA PAZ WANDERED OVER TO THE TABLE

AH? WHAT IS HERE?

WHAT EXQUISITE CHESS PIECES! THEY ARE SO LIFE-LIKE! LIKE TINY HUMAN BEINGS!

HERE IS A CARD! LET ME SEE....

BRAVE LA PAZ! CHAMPION OF ALL CHESS PLAYERS. SAVE FOR THE WRITER OF THIS NOTE!

The Invincible One

78 RUE DE VAINTE

THE CHEEK OF THE FELLOW! EVEN ASSUMING THAT AN UNKNOWN CAN DEFEAT ME! I...WHO HAVE LAID LOW EVERY CHAMPION!

BUT THE MORE LA PAZ TRIED TO PUT THE TANTALIZING CHALLENGE OUT OF HIS MIND, THE MORE IT BOTHERED HIM.

A CURSE ON THE FOOL! HE HAS AROUSED MY CURIOSITY! I MUST SEE THIS IDIOT WITH HIS DELUSIONS OF GRANDEUR! ...78 RUE DE VANITE! EH?

THE NIGHT WAS WET AND COLD! ALL THE CABS WERE TAKEN! SO LA PAZ DECIDED TO WALK. BUT TO WHERE? IN WHAT DIRECTION?

RUE DE VANITE? THERE IS NO SUCH PLACE, MONSIEUR! AT LEAST I NEVER HEARD OF IT!

THERE ARE PROBABLY A MILLION THINGS YOU NEVER HEARD OF, FOOL! I'LL FIND IT MYSELF!

BUT AFTER AN HOUR OF SEARCHING, LA PAZ HIMSELF WAS READY TO AGREE WITH THE FOOL!

THE PLACE DOES NOT EXIST! IT MUST BE SOME CRANK PLAYING A TRICK ON ME... (GASP!) THERE IT IS! RUE DE VANITE! I COULD HAVE SWORN, WHEN I FIRST LOOKED AT IT, THE SIGN, READ— RUE BLANCHE!

RUE DE VANITE

78! THIS FELLOW HAS MONEY IF NOTHING ELSE! THE ENTIRE BUILDING IS MADE OF MARBLE!

GOOD EVENING, LA PAZ! MY HOUSE WAS NOT EASY TO FIND, EH?.... YOU LOOK SURPRISED!— IS IT MY HOUSE?— MY COSTUME PERHAPS, THAT AMAZES YOU?

IF I'D KNOWN IT WAS A MASQUERADE PARTY, I'D HAVE COME MORE APPROPRIATELY DRESSED! DO YOU USUALLY DRESS SO BIZARRELY?

ONLY TO HEIGHTEN YOUR CURIOSITY! I ASSURE YOU... WHATEVER ELSE MAY STRIKE YOU AS CAMOUFLAGE— MY TALENT FOR CHESS IS MOST GENUINE! I HAVE NOT CALLED MYSELF "THE INVINCIBLE ONE" WITHOUT REASON! SHALL WE ENTER THE CHESS ROOM?

(GASP!)— THIS IS LIKE A MEDIEVAL COURTYARD! I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT!

IT'S THE LEAST OF YOUR SURPRISES FOR TONIGHT! CONSIDER THE CHESS-MEN! NOTICE ANYTHING UNUSUAL ABOUT THEM?

THEY LOOK— (GASP!)— THEY ARE! T-THEY'RE ALIVE!
ONLY NOW— BEFORE THE GAME! WITH EACH MOVE YOU OR I WILL MAKE, ONE OF THEM WILL DIE! IT'S NOTHING TO BE HORRIFIED ABOUT! IT IS A GAME OF LIFE TO WIN AND LIVE—OR LOSE—AND DIE!

INCIDENTALLY, THESE ARE OUR STAKES TOO! THE WINNER WILL LIVE! THE LOSER DIES!!
Y-YOU'RE MAD! THE WHOLE THING IS MAD!! YOU, THE HOUSE, THE CHESS MEN, THE STAKES!!

SPOKEN LIKE A COWARD! ONLY A MAN WHO KNOWS IN HIS HEART THAT HE IS NOT A CHAMPION WILL SEEK EXCUSES TO ESCAPE THE SUPREME TEST OF HIS POWERS! GO, COWARDLY FAKE! GO BACK TO THE WORLD YOU HAVE DECEIVED WITH YOUR TRICKS!
THEN YOU THINK YOU CAN BEAT SIMON LA PAZ? VERY WELL, IDIOT! I SHALL HAVE YOUR LIFE AS PROOF OF MY GENIUS!

AND SO THE GAME OF CHESS BEGAN, EACH PLAYER TAKING HIS SEAT AT EITHER END OF THE GREAT HALL.
I AM READY, LA PAZ! MAKE YOUR FIRST MOVE
VERY WELL! PAWN 4-2!

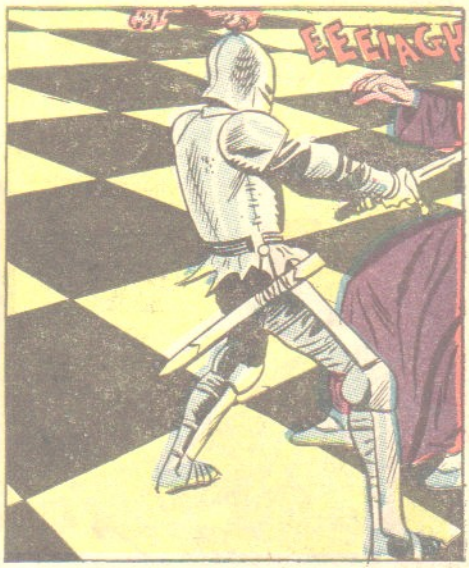
EXCELLENT! PAWN 3-2

COMMANDS SNAPPED BACK AND FORTH. THE BOARD SEETHED WITH MOVEMENT THEN---
BISHOP 2-5-3!

EEEEAAAAA!

(GASP!) H-HE KILLED YOUR PAWN!

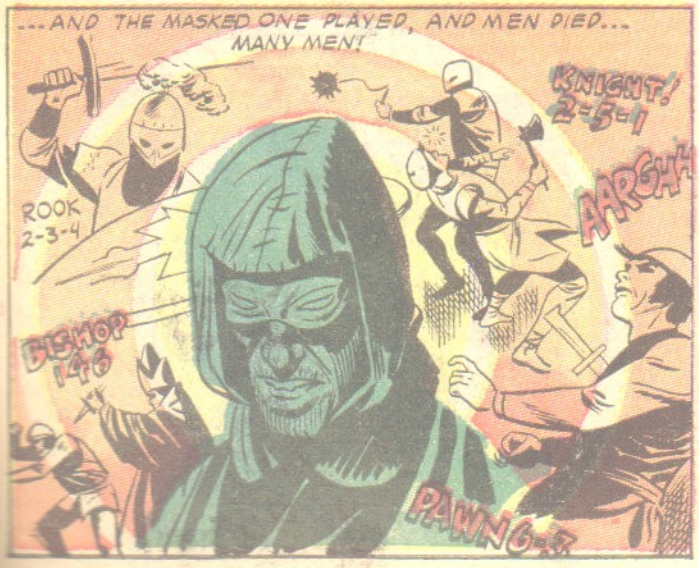
HIS TRIUMPH WILL BE SHORT-LIVED! KNIGHT 2-3-2!


EEEIAGH

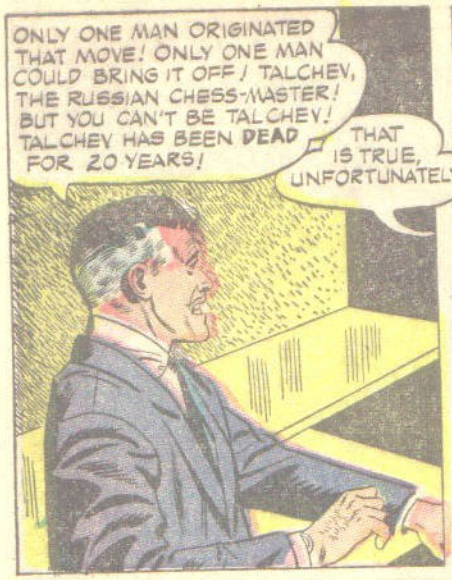
(GROA!) T-THIS IS HORRIBLE! I CAN'T LOOK!

BETTER LOOK, LA PAZ! IF YOU FORFEIT THE GAME... YOU'LL BE LYING DOWN THERE IN A POOL OF BLOOD! PLAY OR DIE!

LA PAZ PLAYED AND....
QUEEN 4-2!

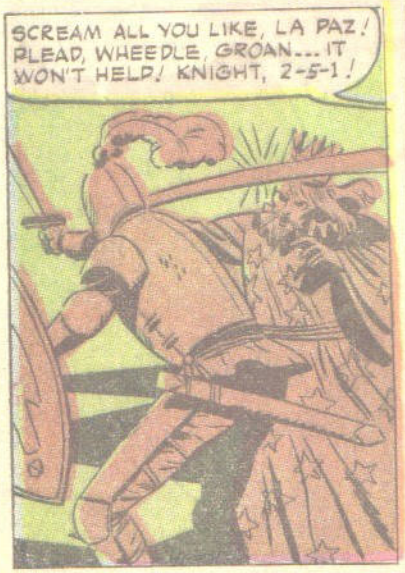

...AND THE MASKED ONE PLAYED, AND MEN DIED... MANY MEN!
KNIGHT! 2-5-1
AARGH!
ROOK 2-3-4
BISHOP 1-4-6
PAWN 6-7

BUT NO MATTER THE MOVES, LA PAZ WAS LOSING! STEADILY LOSING! LOSING WITH EVERY MINUTE SUDDENLY.
KNIGHT 2-5-2!
WAIT! THAT MOVE... KNIGHT 2-5-2 TO TAKE THE QUEEN! IT IS CHARACTERISTIC OF ONLY ONE MAN!


ONLY ONE MAN ORIGINATED THAT MOVE! ONLY ONE MAN COULD BRING IT OFF! TALCHEV, THE RUSSIAN CHESS-MASTER! BUT YOU CAN'T BE TALCHEV! TALCHEV HAS BEEN DEAD FOR 20 YEARS!
THAT IS TRUE, UNFORTUNATELY.

BUT FORTUNATELY, MY JEALOUSY AT YOUR FAME, LA PAZ, MADE ME RETURN FROM THE DEAD TO PROVE MY SUPERIORITY!
(GASP!) TALCHEV!

YES-TALCHEV! THE GREATEST CHESS-MIND IN HISTORY! THE GREATEST MASTER SINCE THE GAME WAS INVENTED! AND NOW THAT I HAVE DESTROYED YOUR QUEEN... I SHALL TAKE YOUR KING! YOU ARE CHECKMATE!


SCREAM ALL YOU LIKE, LA PAZ! PLEAD, WHEEDLE, GROAN... IT WON'T HELP! KNIGHT, 2-5-1!

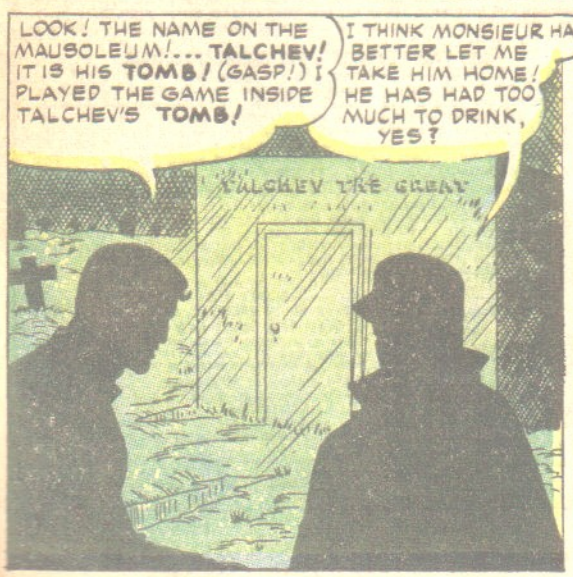
THE GAME IS ENDED! NOW FOR THE FORFEIT! YOUR LIFE, LA PAZ YOU HAVE LOST THE GAME AND YOU MUST DIE!
PLEASE ... HAVE MERCY... TALCHEV MERCY!

WAIT, TALCHEV! YOU CAN'T KILL LA PAZ, BECAUSE YOU HAVE NOT WON!
WHO SAYS THIS? HE LIES, WHO-EVER HE IS! LA PAZ'S KING LIES DEAD ON THE CHESS BOARD. VICTORY IS MINE!

NO, TALCHEV! VICTORY IS MINE! YOU CHEATED! WITH YOUR SUPERNATURAL POWER, TALCHEV, YOU KNEW EVERY MOVE OF LA PAZ'S IN ADVANCE! BEING ALREADY DEAD, YOU COULD NOT DIE IF YOU LOST!

I THEREFORE DESTROY ALL YOUR CHESS-MEN! YOU HAVE WON FRAUDULENTLY, THEREFORE YOU HAVE NOT WON AT ALL!

NARFSTAR



THE NEXT DAY, SIME LA PAZ ANNOUNCED HIS RETIREMENT. HE WOULD NEVER PLAY AGAIN AS LONG AS HE LIVED! NOBODY UNDERSTOOD WHY... EXCEPT ONE, PERHAPS AND "HE" WOULD KEEP LA PAZ'S SECRET!!

THE END